

ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DOEE-00	PERC-00
	DS-00	EB-00	FBIE-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00
	NSAE-00	ISN-00	NIMA-00	GIWI-00	SCT-00	FMPC-00	SP-00
	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	ASDS-00	SCRS-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00
	NFAT-00	SAS-00	SWCI-00	/000W			

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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5032

INFO ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

ISLAMIC CONFERENCE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY

NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D), B6

S E C R E T JAKARTA 015137

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/21/2015

TAGS: PREL, PTER, KISL, ID

SUBJECT: REACTION TO AL-FAROUQ ESCAPE: INCREDULITY AND
CONSPIRACY THEORIES ABOUND

REF: JAKARTA 14910 (AMBASSADOR ENGAGES LEGISLATORS)

Classified By: Political Officer John Rath. Reason: 1.4 (d).

1. (C) Summary: Many Indonesians greeted news of Al-Qaeda operative Omar Al-Farouq's reported escape from a U.S. military prison in Afghanistan with incredulity and/or a suspicion of USG duplicity. President Yudhoyono expressed public dismay over the escape, and conspiracy theory-spinning Muslim activists joined some secular politicians and NGO types in alleging that the USG "stage-managed" the escape as a way to "corner" Islam and intervene in Indonesian affairs. Some GOI officials complained to the media of poor bilateral communication about the escape. The Ambassador was asked repeatedly about Al-Farouq's escape in a recent meeting with parliamentarians, and the matter also came up during the November 16 visit of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales.

B1

Allegations of Fabrication

2. (C) The September 2002 "Time" magazine expose of the purported activities of Al-Qaeda operative Omar Al-Farouq in Indonesia created at the time a major media sensation here.

and hard-line Muslim activists such as Abu Bakar Ba'asyir alleged that Al-Farouq was either a fiction created by the USG or an American agent provocateur sent to pave the way for American intervention in Indonesia. Over the past two weeks, news of Al-Farouq's reported escape from a U.S. military facility in Afghanistan has reignited public suspicion about Al-Farouq's identity, activities, and allegiances, although most mainstream media reports described Al-Farouq as a senior Al Qaeda figure. For example, hard-line Islamic stalwarts such as Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) mouthpiece Fauzan Al-Ansari and others asserted that news of Al-Farouq's escape is an extension of a long-running American "fabrication" designed to "corner" Islam and justify expanded American intervention in Indonesia. Fauzan joined Ba'asyir's attorney in predicting that Al-Farouq's escape will be used in some manner to either prevent Ba'asyir from leaving prison in June 2006 when his terror-related sentence expires or as a basis for Ba'asyir's re-arrest and trial on new charges. Embassy officers heard somewhat similar but milder criticism and allegations from Indonesian contacts and ordinary citizens when making courtesy calls during the recent Id ul-Fitr holiday.

B1

GOI Reaction: Generally Incredulous, At Times Shrill

3. (S) In comments to the local media upon news of Al-Farouq's escape, President Yudhoyono noted public security implications and stated that the GOI would take measures to deter potential action by Al-Farouq in Indonesia. He also said he would seek clarification through diplomatic channels of the circumstances surrounding Al-Farouq's escape:

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4. (C) Other GOI officials weighed in with unhelpful public

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remarks regarding the Al-Farouq escape case. For instance, Islamist legislator and People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) Deputy Chairman A.M. Fatwa, [redacted] House of Representatives (DPR) member Theo Sambuaga [redacted] and Indonesian Institute of Sciences Deputy Chairwoman (and respected political commentator) Dewi Fortuna Anwar sounded many of the points raised by hard-line Muslims when calling for a full GOI investigation into the escape. DPR legislators also questioned the Ambassador about the Al-Farouq escape during a November 15 meeting with the DPR's Foreign Affairs Committee (reftel). One such legislator, Permadi of the PDI-P party who had parlayed fame as Indonesia's best-known sorcerer into a political career, was particularly keen to probe additional details of Al-Farouq's

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B6

escape.

5. (C) [redacted]

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GOI CT

czar Ansyad Mbai and Foreign Ministry spokesmen complained loudly to the media that they had not been duly informed of Al-Farouq's escape and had to rely on the media for information. The Foreign Ministry spokesmen subsequently amended their complaint, [redacted] to say that the Foreign Ministry had received no news of the escape from either the USG or from any GOI agency. Mbai and National Police Chief Sutanto further spun the story as a potential national security threat due to the possibility of Al-Farouq's return to Indonesia, and they warned Indonesians to be vigilant. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales was asked about the matter by his GOI Attorney General Saleh and by Indonesian journalists during his November 16 visit to Jakarta, and he replied that the escape remains under investigation.

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Comment

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